

SELLARS VS. GRICE ON SAYING*

José Luis Liñán

Universidad de Granada

ABSTRACT: In this paper I argue that Sellars' linguistic approach to conceptual abilities can provide notions of *saying* and *what is said* which are alternative to Grice's and can be profitably employed as a pragmatist foundation for philosophical theories of language and especially for pragmatics. According to this alternative approach, linguistic activity –broadly understood in social terms–, and in particular certain episodes of rule-governed verbal behavior, constitutes together the basic stratum of intentionality, conceptualization, and meaning.

KEY WORDS: Social-linguistics, Sellars, intentionality, meaning, Grice, pragmatics.

* The present work has benefited from valuable comments by Juan José Acero and Ruth Marín.

I

I will start by highlighting two motifs in Grice's project which have decisively contributed to shape contemporary studies about language and, especially, the discipline of linguistic pragmatics (cf. Frapolli & Villanueva, 2007). The first one may be labeled *intentional motif*, for it involves understanding *nonnatural meaning* (or *meaning_{NN}*) as a function of speakers' intentions. This insight is already outlined in his 1957 classical paper on «Meaning»:

«*A* meant_{NN} something by *x*» is (roughly) equivalent to «*A* intended the utterance of *x* to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention». (Grice, 1989, p. 220)

By appeal to a specific class of *communicative intentions*, Grice introduces the notion of *speaker's meaning*, which constitutes the most basic instance of *meaning_{NN}*. Other semantic notions, in particular the meaning of linguistic expressions, are in turns construed in terms of speaker's meaning. This explanatory order is at the core of what Grice will later present, in his «Retrospective Epilogue», as the «fourth thematic strand» recurring in his work, and may be summarized in the idea that «what words mean is a matter of what people mean by them» (1989, p. 340).

According to Grice, primary cases of *meaning_{NN}* involve the performance of an action by the speaker. The episodes of speaker's meaning are a type of intentional action consisting in the utterance of a linguistic expression. This is reflected in the form of the *analysandum* that Grice undertakes:

By doing *x*, the speaker meant '___'.

The second motif I want to focus on is Grice's concern for identifying «a central or primary range of cases of signification» which may «offer itself as a core around which more peripheral cases of signification might cluster, perhaps in dependent posture» (1989, p. 359). This motif, which Grice himself brings under the head of *centrality*, points toward a differentiation of levels of meaning. Thus, any utterance may be assigned a *central* speaker's meaning, which must be carefully distinguished from any other layers of information that the utterance may be considered to convey –e.g. what the utterer indicates, presupposes, hints, etc. This distinction is seen in terms of speech acts. Grice suggests that «speakers may be at one and the same time engaged in performing speech-acts at different but related levels» (1989, p. 362), which result in different levels of (speaker's) meaning. Accordingly, Grice picks out a central speech act, *saying*, which corresponds with a basic level or stratum of speaker's meaning, *what is said*.

In «Utterer's Meaning and Intentions» Grice provides a canonical definition of this central speech act. «*U* (utterer) said that *p*» is analyzed as:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <i>U</i> did something <i>x</i> | (1) by which <i>U</i> centrally meant that <i>p</i> |
| | (2) which is an occurrence of a type <i>S</i> part of the meaning of which is ' <i>p</i> '. (Grice, 1989, p. 88) |

Although the adverb 'centrally' occurs in condition (1) of the *analysans*, an essential feature of centrality concerns condition (2). The above formulation of this condition is

the last step in a series of tentative approaches. First, Grice considers «(2) [*x*] is a type which means '*p*'», and parenthetically comments, «that is, has for some person or other an established standard or conventional meaning» (1989, p. 87). Right after, Grice adds, «[w]e want doing *x* to be a linguistic act», so he decides to include in the *analisans* the notion of a linguistic system –a specific kind of conventional device. This produces, in abbreviated form, «(2) [*x*] is an occurrence of a type *S* which means '*p*' in some linguistic system». The clause «in some linguistic system» does not occur, but is understood, in the definitive formulation. Now, *conventionality* –or for Grice also, *formality*– is one of the two features that he takes into account as possible criteria of centrality in «Retrospective Epilogue»:

One class of cases of significance with a seemingly good claim to centrality would be those in which the items or situations signified are picked out as such by their falling under the conventional meaning of the signifying expression rather than by some more informal or indirect relationship to the signifying expression. (Grice, 1989, p. 360)

The adverb 'centrally' in condition (1) alludes to the other feature, which Grice later terms, in «Retrospective Epilogue», *dictiveness* (cf. Latin 'dictio'). The «*dictive* content» of an utterance is that part of its meaning which is relevant to evaluate the truth of the utterance. The notion of *dictiveness* makes it possible to identify that «ground-floor» or primary speech act –*saying*– in contrast with which, other speech acts, nonprimary ones, can be distinguished.

[A] special centrality should be attributed to those instances of signification in which what is signified either is, or forms part of, or is specially and appropriately connected with what the signifying expression (or its user) *says* as distinct from implies, suggest, hints, or in some other less than fully direct manner conveys. (1989, p. 360)

In virtue of *dictiveness*, a speaker cannot be imputed to *have said* anything beyond the truth-conditions of the uttered sentence.

Grice tends to privilege dictiveness as the mark of centrality, since there are «elements in the conventional meaning of an utterance which are *not* part of what has been said» (1989, p. 122), and which are better accounted for in terms of conventional *implicatures* –as in the well-known examples «Sue is poor *but* honest», and «He is an Englishman; he is, *therefore*, brave». In any case, however, both dictiveness and formality are essential to the *central* act of saying, as the above definition, or this alternative one –occurring in «Utterer's Meaning, Sentece-Meaning and Word-Meaning»–, makes it clear:

[I]n uttering *X*, *U* will have said that **p*, if both (i) *U* has *Y*-ed that **p*, where *Y*-ing is a *central* speech act, and (ii) *X* embodies some *conventional* device the meaning of which is such that its presence in *X* indicates that its utterer is *Y*-ing that **p*. (1989, p. 121; my italics)

Grice acknowledges that the sense of 'saying' he favors is «in some degree artificial» (1989, p. 118). He declares that «[m]y primary reason for opting for this particular sense of 'say' is that I expect it to be of greater theoretical utility than some other sense of 'say' would be» (1989, p. 121). Indeed, the contrast between *what is said*, in Grice's sense,

and other levels of speaker's meaning –like, especially, different types of *implicature*– constitutes the cornerstone of his approach to conversation, and therefore, of his theory of linguistic communication. This theory has proven to be enormously fruitful in detecting, and dealing with, a huge variety of phenomena that was hardly accessible for previous approaches.

However, some philosophers –Sellars among them– see the intentional motif which is at the basis of Grice's project as an onerous burden, that we should dispense with. The question I want to raise in this paper is whether we can benefit from the positive insights that Grice's theory of communication and his most operative notions provide, without thereby committing ourselves to the priority of mental intentionality. By distinguishing two motifs within Grice's project, I have cleared up the ground for a positive answer. In the following two sections I will be arguing that in Sellars' work we can find both a line of criticism against Grice's intentional strategy (§II), and a seminal notion of *saying* which, being alternative to Grice's, can be claimed to instantiate the two features of centrality that are involved in his notion of *saying* (§III).

II

Sellars mentions Grice in an illuminating context, in the course of his reply to the objections Putnam addresses to MFC. Sellars writes:

I have always stressed that language is a social institution, and that meaning is to be construed in social terms. [...] What a speaker's words mean (to use a less ambiguous expression which has the additional advantage of pointing away from Gricean labyrinths) is no more to be defined in terms of his beliefs and purposes than is, for example, the legal significance of his actions (RDP, p. 460).

This passage reveals Sellars' opinions about the Gricean explanations. However, when Sellars criticizes in depth the views that could be attributed to Grice, the latter is not mentioned. In LTC (p. 510n. 2) Sellars does refer generally to «John Austin and his students», and charged them with an approach to language according to which all linguistic activity would consist of *actions* performed by the speakers. This approach would be a result of overemphasizing the *communicative* function of language, as Sellars remarks in another work:

- [1] [A] source of misunderstanding of the nature of meaning is the current stress on language as a means of communication, an emphasis which has led many philosophers to see language in the perspective of action-theory. Utterances are construed as *actions* which, when successful, realize *intentions* that hearers acquire *beliefs*. An attempt is then made to construe the *meaning* of linguistic items in terms of the *conceptual content* of the standard intentions and beliefs which are involved in the acts of communication in which these items are deployed. (NAO, V, §4)

I will soon come back to Sellars' treatment of what he calls «the paradigm of action», since the reasons for his criticism are closely related to his own program for approaching language. Firstly, it is worth showing that, in the above quotation, crucial aspects of

Grice's view are at stake. To that effect, I will pay some attention to Grice's paper «Meaning Revisited», where he offers a general sketch of his account of language in terms of mental intentionality. He writes: «The first of the three correspondences which one might expect to find when thinking in largish terms about the relationships between reality, thought, and language or communication device, is a correspondence between thought and reality» (Grice, 1989, p. 284). Nonnatural meaning may have emerged, Grice suggests, as a gradual development of biological devices of natural meaning. Communication by conventional means, linguistic activity in particular, would have evolved from natural expressions of psychological states, such as shouts of pain. Grice describes a step-by-step sophistication of the relevant states: even before becoming full-fledged speakers, creatures could have purposes and intentions, recognize their pairs' intentions, and even attribute truthfulness and responsibility to them (1989, p. 294). Thus, starting from a wide range of contentful psychological states –postulated by the theorist in order to explain how the creatures' behavior coordinates with physical environment–, communication is conceived as the expression of those states and its reproduction in other creatures; therefore, as a second correspondence within the «triangle consisting of reality, thought, and language or communication devices» (1989, p. 286).

[P]sychological states which initially attach to one creature can be transmitted or transferred or reproduced in another creature (a process which might be called ψ -transmission) [...]. Obviously, the production of communication devices is a resource which will help to effect such transfers. [/] If one accepts this idea, then one could simply accept that for the process to be intelligible [...] there will have to be correspondences between particular communication devices or utterances on the one hand, and psychological states on the other. (1989, p. 286f)

In favorable cases of communication, the hearer reproduces the psychological state that the speaker intended to transmit. Moreover, the recovery of that state –that is, a state with the same content– constitutes the success of the communicative episode. Language, as a system of conventions, plays an *instrumental* role in the reproductive process of communication: it is a device deployed by the speakers to realize their communicative intentions.

Grice's outline perpetuates a traditional point of view about the relations between world, thought, and language, the criticism of which in EPM (§§47, 50) is part and parcel of Sellars' campaign against the «Myth of the Given». The key of this «classical view» consists in analyzing the meaning of linguistic utterances in terms of the intentionality of thought, according to this schema:

«'...' means *p*» is to be analyzed as «'...' expresses *t*, and *t* is about *p*». (ITM, p. 534)

Here the notion of meaning that occurs in the *analysandum* is explicated as a unique *relation* resulting from other two relations involved in the *analysans*: an *expressive* relation between language and thought, and a previous relation of intentionality or *aboutness* between thought and world. These three relations institute the «triangle» of «correspondences» Grice deals with.

Already in EPM, under the figure of the «Myth of Jones» (§§53-59), Sellars adumbrates an opposed theoretical program, in which the semantic categories that apply

directly to language are taken to be primitive and serve as the model for understanding the intentionality of mental episodes. An essential element in this alternative view is a nonrelational analysis of the notion of meaning and, in particular, of *mean-statements* –sentences of the form «‘...’ means *p*». Another ingredient consists in according priority to the role that language plays as a medium of thought over its instrumental role in communication, which leads to the idea that learning the language amounts to acquiring conceptual capacities. These pieces, which Sellars shapes in various essays of the 1950s, fit together in LTC.¹ It is here where Sellars presents, as an alternative to the dominant intentional approach to language, «a linguistic approach to conceptual abilities» (LTC, p. 510), and where he explicitly states the theoretical program I have been referring to, that is «a program according to which (a) linguistic activity is, in a primary sense, conceptual activity; (b) linguistic activity is through and through rule-governed» (LTC, p. 510).

The two parts, (a) and (b), of this program, which I will call *Sellars’ program* –or just *the program*–, can be thought of as setting adequacy conditions for any philosophically sound theory of language. According to (a), the theory has to account for the conceptual import of linguistic activity. It is important to note that the claim involved in (a) is a strong, two-directional one: not only must linguistic activity be considered conceptual activity; conceptual activity must be understood as consisting of linguistic activity in the very first place. Sellars, thus, sees language as «the bearer of conceptual activity» (LTC, p. 511), «the very medium in which we think» (MFC, p. 417). This is the fundamental function of language, which underlies its *instrumental* function in communication and in the performance of speech acts. Inverting this order of functions is to «run the risk of getting things upside down» (NAO, V, §§6, 24).

Part (b) of the program articulates the general idea that linguistic practice –and *therefore*, in the light of (a), concept-application– is a normative activity, which takes place against a social background of sanctions and public criteria of correction. The strong reading of (a) determines how the rules involved in that activity must be rendered, for it makes (b) to be interchangeable with the following (b’), «*conceptual* activity is through and through rule-governed». If the theory aims to explain «what is to have concepts in terms of rules of language» (LTC, p. 510), it must devise a kind of rules that do not imply the possession of concepts by the subjects to which the rules in question are supposed to apply.

To this effect –and at least since SRLG–, Sellars distinguishes two types of rules, which he terms, respectively, rules of action (or *ought-to-dos*) and rules of criticism (*ought-to-bes*). The first have the form:

If one is in *C*, ought to do *A* (LTC, p. 507),

where *C* denotes a set of circumstances, and *A* a specific action. The subject to which this type of rule applies will also be, in case of being in *C*, the subject of the action *A*. Consequently, he or she has to be an agent, able to act accordingly to the rule, and able as well to recognize that the circumstances *C* obtain. In short, the subject must have «the concepts of *doing A* and *being in C*» (LTC, p. 508). Rules of criticism, in contrast, have the form:

¹ A proximate antecedent can be found in chapter III of SM (see specially §§25-41).

Xs ought to be in state ϕ , whenever such and such is the case. (LTC, p. 507)

Here, the subjects of the rule, the *Xs*, do not have to possess any concept –in particular, the concepts of *being in ϕ* and *such and such being the case*. The *Xs* in question may even be inanimate objects, like in the following example:

Clock chimes ought to strike on the quarter hour. (LTC, p. 507)

Since the subject of an ought-to-do rule needs to have the concepts involved in its formulation, if we want to carry out part (a) of Sellars' program, we must assume that at least many of the rules governing linguistic activity –part (b)– are of the second type, that is, ought-to-bes. Sellars' stance is that speakers acquire, at once, language *and* conceptual abilities by conforming their behavior to ought-to-be rules. The first grade of linguistic *and* conceptual activity is made of episodes that do not consist in *obeying* rules of action, but rather *exemplify* rules of criticism. «The language learner», Sellars says, «begins by *conforming* to these rules without grasping them himself.» (MFC, p. 422) Thus, the first form of rule-governed behavior consists of episodes *patterned* by rules.

In the acquisition of this kind of pattern-governed behavior by the language-learners, adult speakers, who already have concepts and can obey ought-to-do rules, play an essential correcting role. This mediation is illuminated by the fact that, in general, as Sellars remarks, «ought-to-bes imply ought-to-dos» (LTC, p. 508); so, to take back the above example, the ought-to-be rule «Clock chimes ought to strike on the quarter hour», implies an ought-to-do like:

(Other things being equal and where possible) one ought to bring it about that clock chimes strike on the quarter hour. (LTC, p. 508)

Likewise, in the domain of language, every semantic ought-to-be rule implies an ought-to-do rule –let's call it «pedagogic»– which applies to the adults responsible for introducing the child in the conceptual life of the community. «Linguistic ought-to-bes are translated into *uniformities* by training.» (LTC, p. 512) The resulting picture is one in which «[t]rainees conform to ought-to-bes because trainers obey corresponding ought-to-dos» (MFC, p. 423). The apprentice's behavior exhibits the following ought-to-be,

(*Ceteris paribus*) one ought to respond to red objects in sunlight by uttering or being disposed to utter 'this is red' (LTC, p. 511),

because competent adults obey a pedagogic ought-to-do like this,

One ought to bring it about (*ceteris paribus*) that people respond to red objects in sunlight by uttering or being disposed to utter 'this is red' (LTC, p. 512),

in virtue of which they selectively reinforce the desired pattern of behavior in the child. This division of labor justifies Sellars' claim that «[a]s Wittgenstein has stressed, it is the linguistic community as a self-perpetuating whole which is the minimum unit in terms of which conceptual activity can be understood» (LTC, p. 512).

Let us go back now to Sellars' mention of «John Austin and his students», which I left pending at the beginning of this section. We saw that, on Sellars' view –in quotation [1]–, overemphasizing the communicative function of language leads to approach linguistic activity from the paradigm of action. We can now see how this paradigm entails a commitment with the existence of a nonlinguistic level of conceptual activity. Certainly, if we assimilate linguistic activity to a repertoire of actions, then, even adhering part (b) of the program, we cannot account for (a) –and therefore, for (b'). For, in that case, the rules governing linguistic activity will be all ought-to-dos, and the participants in that activity will have to possess previously the concepts involved in the formulation of the rules. This will prevent us from explaining the possession and application of concepts in terms of rules of language. And this, in turns, will force us to accept a nonlinguistic and so non rule-governed, level of conceptualization. The paradigm of action bears a one-sided perspective over rules and entails a sort of inversion of Sellars' program:

[T]o approach language in terms of the paradigm of action is to make a commitment which, if the concept of action is taken seriously, and the concept of rule is taken seriously, leads to (a) the Cartesian idea of linguistic episodes as essentially the sort of thing brought about by an agent whose conceptualizing is not linguistic; (b) an inability to understand the rule-governed character of this conceptualizing itself, as contrasted with its overt expression. (LTC, p. 510)

In RM and MFC Sellars presents this Cartesian idea as the inescapable conclusion of two premisses. The first condenses in a claim the tendency of the paradigm of action. The second is a truism that Sellars not only embraces, but takes as a basis for his own approach to conceptual activity:

- [2] Obviously not all thoughts are actions. Indeed such central kinds of thoughts as perceptual takings, inferences, and volitions are not actions for the simple reason that they are not the sort of thing that can be done intentionally or that one can decide to do. (RM, p. 122; MFC, p. 420; cf. *SM*, III, §33)

Thus, we obtain the following argument, which I will call *argument C*:

- (Pr 1) All complete episode of linguistic activity constitutes an action, and is meaningful insofar as this action is performed in accordance with conventional, ought-to-do rules.
- (Pr 2) There are thoughts –conceptual episodes– which are not actions, namely perceptual takings, inferences, and volitions.
- (C) There are thoughts and, therefore, a level of conceptualization which are no linguistic activity and, *a fortiori*, are not governed by linguistic rules.

A corollary of this argument is that linguistic activity, understood as a repertoire of actions, consists in the *expression*, under ought-to-do rules, of nonlinguistic conceptual episodes. Again, when Sellars sketches this line of thought, Grice's strategy resounds between the lines:

If all *linguistic* episodes were actions, then all conceptually meaningful non-actions would have to be non-linguistic and, hence, thoughts in something like the Cartesian sense. It would be at this *non-linguistic* level that the thinking would occur by virtue of which *linguistic* activity could realize intentions and constitute a domain of actions. It is but a step from this to construing languages as essentially an instrument for ‘expressing thoughts’ –when one is being candid– and, in general, for leading others to believe that one believes that-*p* (or intends that-*p*), and perhaps intends that they believe that one intends that they so believe, etc. (MFC, p. 420f; RM, p. 122)

Let’s summarize the main Gricean themes to which Sellars addresses critical attention: a view of mental *intentionality* as prior to the meaning of linguistic episodes; a *relational* conception of that intentionality; an insistence in language as an *instrument* for the expression and communication of previously contentful psychological states. These themes are interwoven in what, in §I, I called Grice’s «intentional motif». We have seen that Sellars promotes an alternative program that renders language as essentially the *medium of thought* and conceptualization. He accordingly considers the *semantic categories* which apply directly to language as the primary locus of intentionality. In the next section I will finish the outline of this program, and derive from it the idea of a basic linguistic episode that could arguably rival the Gricean notion of *saying*. The success of the whole proposal depends on the plausibility of offering a *nonrelational* analysis of the meaning of those episodes.

III

Sellars’ program involves characterizing a basic stratum of rule-governed linguistic behavior which, not consisting in the performance of actions, could be taken, at the same time, to be conceptual activity. Episodes of this form of behavior are, on the one hand, the way of access to language, and on the other, constitute those thoughts referred in the second premise of the argument *C*. By accounting for these thoughts in terms of rule-governed linguistic episodes, the step to conclusion (*C*) gets blocked. And, indeed, the relevant behavior is patterned in accordance with three kinds of ought-to-be rules, which correspond to the three kinds of thoughts –perceptual takings, inferences, and volitions– that Sellars mentions in passage [2]. The first kind of rules concerns «language entry transitions», by ensuring that «[t]he speaker responds, *ceteris paribus*, to objects in perceptual situations [...] with appropriate linguistic activity» (MFC, p. 423). There are, secondly, rules governing «intralinguistic transitions», that is, both material and formal inferential patterns. Yet a third group of rules accounts for volitions, by specifying «language departure transitions» in virtue of which «[t]he speaker responds, *ceteris paribus*, to such linguistic episodes as ‘I will now raise my hand’ with an upward motion of the hand, etc.» (LTC, p. 424). The semantic rules of a language are ought-to-bes defining these three types of transitions.

It must be remarked that this pattern-governed behavior constitutes the basic level of both conceptualization *and* meaning. At this level, the practitioners think without performing proper actions, and those thoughts amount to linguistic utterances: «‘thinking that-*p*’ is, in its most episodic sense, to be equated with ‘candid and spontaneously uttering ‘*p*’’.» (LTC, p. 516) For this reason, Sellars calls the episodes involved in this form of behavior «*thinkings-out-loud*». Thus, he claims, on the one

hand, that «thinking that-*p* is, in its *primary episodic* sense, thinking-out-loud that-*p*» (LTC, p. 517), and on the other hand, that «thinking-out-loud is a form of meaningful speech which doesn't consist in talking *to* anyone at all» (LTC, p. 518). Such episodes are just the *realization* or *actualization* of a pattern-governed behavior.

Certainly, during the learning process, we can suppose the child to develop the ability to inhibit voluntarily the verbal flow associated to this kind of episodes (LTC, p. 522), thereby acquiring the ability to «think quietly». As the child becomes familiar with concepts relative to different types of actions, it will eventually acquire the ability to perform linguistic actions proper, genuine speech acts. However, and this is important, thinking-out-loud—as a form of behavior patterned according to semantic rules—is not a mere developmental stage in the learning of language, which adult speakers could dispense with when they access to the domain of actions; quite the opposite, it gets established as the rock-bottom conceptual stratum that remains active in full-fledged speakers and sustain their other linguistic and conceptual activities. The next passages make it clear:

‘Thinking out loud’ remains the primary form in which thinking occurs. (LTC, p. 522)

It is essential to note that not only are the abilities to engage in such thinking-out-loud *acquired* as pattern-governed activity, they *remain* pattern-governed activity. The linguistic activities which are perceptual takings, inferences and volitions *never* become *obeying of ought to do* rules. (MFC, p. 424)

It is the pattern-governed activities of perception, inference and volition, themselves essentially non-actions, which underlie and make possible the domain of action, linguistic and nonlinguistic. (MFC, p. 425; cf. *NAO*, V, §11)

In addition, Sellars claims that this basic kind of linguistic activity has intrinsic intentionality: «verbal behavior as thinking-out-loud has *intrinsic* intentionality» (*NAO*, V, §23).

I now arrive to the core of my proposal. In terms of this variety of episodes, a basic notion of *saying* can be introduced, according to which «saying ‘*p*’» consists in «candidly and spontaneously uttering ‘*p*’», and amounts to «thinking-out-loud that-*p*». Sellars puts forward this strategy in MFC: «thinking ‘that-*p*’, where this means ‘having the thought occur to one that-*p*’ has its *primary* sense *saying* ‘*p*’» (MFC, p. 418f). Few lines below, Sellars distinguishes this sense of “saying” from the sense that animates the paradigm of action:

In any ordinary sense, of course, saying ‘*p*’ is an action or performance. [...] [T]o characterize an utterance as a ‘saying’, as the verb ‘to say’ is ordinarily used, permit it to be either a spontaneous thinking-out-loud that-*p* or a deliberate use of words to achieve a purpose. Here, on the other hand, the verb ‘to say’ is being use in a *contrived* sense in which these options are closed, and the utterance specifically construed as a spontaneous or candid thinking out loud. (MFC, p. 419f)

By calling it «contrived», Sellars recognizes that his notion of *saying* is to some extent idealized. It should be recalled, however, that also Grice (1989, p. 118) saw his privileged notion of saying as «in some degree artificial». Hereafter, I will apply the subscripts ‘_s’ and ‘_g’ to the notions of saying—and related notions—favored respectively by Sellars and Grice.

The Sellarian notion of *saying_s* gives rise to an analysis of the basic cases of significance which is alternative to Grice's. In particular, Sellars (LTC, p. 522) favors the following formulation of the *analysandum* of «means»:

[*M_s*] Jones' utterance of '*p*' means *p*.

[*M_s*] contrasts with the *analysandum* proposed by Grice's analysis, which corresponds to an instrumental view of utterances:

[*M_g*] By uttering '*p*', Jones means (to convey) that ____.

Sellars rejects the Gricean formulation, where the sense of 'means' «is closely related to 'intends'» (LTC, p. 523). Instead, statement [*M_s*] does not imply the performance of any action by Jones. Nor does it involve, according to Sellars, any mysterious relation of *aboutness* between the utterance of '*p*' and its meaning, *p*.

In fact, [*M_s*] receives the same style of nonrelational analysis that Sellars provides for general means-statements as, for instance,

'Und' (in German) means *and*;
 'Rot' (in German) means *red*;
 'Es regnet' (in German) means *it's raining*.

On Sellars's view, these statements do not assert a *relation*, and in them 'means' does not count as a predicate. What these statements assert is, rather, a peculiar identity between the quoted expression and the right-hand expression, where 'means' operates as "a specialized form of copula" (MFC, p. 431). The identity involved is functional in character: each expression in the object-language –in these examples German– is claimed to play the same function as the metalanguage expression in the three types of transitions (language-entry, intralinguistic, and language-exit) that Sellars takes as constitutive of conceptual behavior. In other words, in the linguistic-conceptual behavior of German speakers, utterances of 'Es regnet' do (roughly) the same work with respect to the three types of relevant transitions as utterances of 'It's raining' do in the conceptual behavior of English speakers.

Thus, means-statements are attributive statements that assign functional roles to linguistic expressions. Sellars employs an original device, dot-quotation, to indicate this point formally. Dot-quoted expressions are taken to illustrate, on the right-hand side of means-statements, the functional role which is been attributed to left-hand simple-quoted expressions. In this light, the examples above can be rewritten as:

'Und's (in German) are ·and·s;
 'Rot's (in German) are ·red·s;
 'Es regnet's (in German) are ·It's raining's,

where the dot-quoted expressions are sortal predicates which designate functional roles. In sum, according to Sellars,

[T]o say what an expression means is to *classify* it by the use of a sortal predicate the application of which implies that the expression in question does the job in its language which is done in the speaker's language by an expression from which the predicate is formed. (LTC, p. 526f)

Likewise, [M_s] may be reformulated as:

[M_s] Jones' utterances_s of '*p*' are *p*'s.

[M_s] classifies Jones' relevant utterances by assigning the functional role illustrated by *p* to them. As Sellars claims, «verbal behavior *is already thinking in its own right*, and its intentionality or aboutness is simply the appropriateness of classifying it in terms which relate to the linguistic behavior of the group to which one belongs» (LTC, p. 527). Consequently, *what* a speaker, or rather his or her utterance *says_s* is exactly what can be identified in terms of meaning-functional classification. «To say *what* a person says, or, more generally, to say *what* an utterance says, is to give a functional classification of the utterance.» (MFC, p. 421)

The last step in my argument is to show that the Sellarsian notion of *saying_s* can be thought of as demarcating a *central* or *primary* level of meaning, against which other levels can be constructed. To this effect, I will argue that the episodes of *saying_s*, as they are captured by functional means-statements, have both of the features Grice considers essential to those central cases of signification which are to provide the basic material for any philosophical theory of language, and in particular, pragmatic theory.

Firstly, as those episodes of *saying_s* do not involve the performance of any proper action, in saying_s something the speaker takes no specific attitude towards the semantic content of the utterance. *A fortiori*, the speaker cannot mean anything different from what the utterance means in virtue of the standard functional classification that it deserves in the speaker's linguistic community. In particular, since the cases of *saying_s* involve candidly and spontaneously uttering, the speakers who are just *saying_s* cannot be taken to suggest, implicate, be sarcastic, or generally keep any other kind of complex attitude toward *what is said_s*. Thus the utterances constituting cases of *saying_s* have what I will call *pragmatic zero-grade*, which may be associated to the Gricean feature of dictiveness.

Second, these kind of episodes also have what we can call *semantic zero-grade*, insofar as what a speaker *says_s* cannot differ from the *conventional* meaning of the utterance; this semantic zero-grade incorporates the Gricean feature of *formality*. Formality lies here in the conventional association of *tokens* of a certain type with certain functional roles. However, this conventionality doesn't suppose an additional constraint over previously identifiable cases of *saying_s*. The fact that some expressions hold some sort of conventional meaning is due to the fact that they typically play the relevant functions in the appropriate transitions. In Sellars' notion of basic episodes of conceptual activity, a set of (semantic) rules that we can identify with the conventions of public language is already implied.

Consequently, an alternative explanatory order to Grice's results from Sellars' approach. The status of *agent*, capable of having intentions, beliefs or wishes, or capable of undertaking speech acts such as suggesting, promising or implicating, presupposes the

status of *thinker* that makes meaningful utterances, whose conceptual content is social from the very beginning. This approach opens up a space for a normative and social model of conceptual life, which is also an account of linguistic conventions. This way, Sellars' views on intentionality can provide raw materials for a pragmatist alternative to Grice's pragmatics (cf. Beisicker, forthcoming).

In fact, we can glimpse a developmental account of the transition from the Sellarsian ability to *say_s*, to the ability to undertake the kind of action which is defined by the Gricean notion of *saying_g*—from the condition of subjects (patients) of rules of criticism, to the condition of subjects (agents) of corresponding rules of action. As Sellars remarks, “the members of a linguistic community [...] start out by being the subject-matters of the ought-to-be's and graduate to the status of agent subjects of the ought-to-do's” (LTC, p. 512). Or, in another context:

The language learner begins by *conforming* to these rules without grasping them himself. Only subsequently does the language learner become a full-fledged member of the linguistic community. (NAO, IV, §25)

Bibliography

a) Works by Wilfrid Sellars

- EPH (1974): *Essays in Philosophy and its History*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.
- EPM (1956): «Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind.» In Herbert Feigl & Michael Scriven (eds.), *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*. Vol. I. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- ITM (1957): «Intentionality and the Mental.» In Herbert Feigl, Michael Scriven & Grover Maxwell, *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*. Vol. II. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- LTC (1969): «Language as Thought and as Communication.» *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 29: 506-27.
- MFC (1974): «Meaning as Functional Classification (A Perspective on the Relation of Syntax to Semantics).» *Synthese*, 27(3): 417-37.
- NAO (1979): *Naturalism and Ontology*. Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview. Reimpreso con correcciones en 1997.
- RDP (1974): «Reply to Dennett and Putnam.» *Synthese*, 27(3): 457-70.
- RM (1973): «Reply to Marras.» *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 2: 485-93. Reimpreso en EPH, por donde cito.
- SM (1967): *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes*. Londres: Routledge and Kegan Paul. Reedited in 1992 in Atascadero, CA, by Ridgeview.
- SRLG (1954): «Some Reflections on Language Games.» *Philosophy of Science*, 21: 204-28.

b) Other references

- BEISECKER, Dave (forthcoming): «On the Origin of Conventional Meaning: A Pragmatist Alternative to Grice» *Mind and Language*.
- FRAPOLLI, María José & Neftalí Villanueva (2007): «Inference Markers and Conventional Implicatures.» *Teorema*, 26(2): 125-40.
- GRICE, H. Paul (1989): *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.